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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003644

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: REP WOLF DISCUSSES FUTURE OF COALITION FORCE  
PRESENCE WITH IRAQI OFFICIALS

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and (d)

1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: On 28 August 2005, U.S. Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA) met with several members of the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG), including President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jafari. Noting wavering U.S. public opinion over the continued military presence in Iraq, Rep. Wolf queried the ITG members about the consequences of a fixed date for withdrawal in the very near-term. Although their predictions varied, Iraqi officials were unanimous in their position that such a move would be severely detrimental to the development of a secure, stable, and democratic Iraq. END SUMMARY.

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WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE A 'DISASTER' - IRAN TO FILL THE GAP  
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2. (C/NF) At a luncheon with the several high-ranking Iraqi government officials and the U.S. Ambassador, Representative Wolf asked about a near-term U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. Deputy Prime Minister Rowsh Shaways responded that a premature U.S. withdrawal would be a "disaster" and a "victory for the forces of terrorism," urging that any withdrawal be linked to the readiness of the Iraqi security forces. Judge Wael Abdul Latif stated that such a move would compromise the ability of the Iraqi state to govern, and that the country would fracture along ethnic lines. Similarly, Speaker of the National Assembly Hajim Al-Hasani predicted that Iraq would become the biggest problem in the region, and that civil war would likely ensue.

3. (C/NF) President Jalal Talabani stated that Iran would step in to fill the vacuum in the wake of a U.S. pullout, and that Iran's public support for the Iraqi political process was largely rhetoric and not indicative of Iran's true intentions. Iran fears, he said, that the example of a liberal pluralistic society in Iraq would undermine the foundations of their monolithic, autocratic system. The President continued that Lebanese Hizbollah is openly supporting other terrorist groups in Iraq. Reinforcing this theme, Judge Latif implored the U.S. to "work behind the scenes" to combat the assassination operations and activities of militias that he claimed Iranian intelligence supports. President of the Kurdistan Regional Government Nechirvan Barzani stated that while Syria is the source of the majority of terrorists, Iran has more state-sponsored operatives within Iraq.

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TALABANI'S CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS  
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4. (C/NF) As Representative Wolf pressed for the necessary steps forward, President Talabani identified three critical success factors. First, Iraq must develop a true representative government that includes Sunnis. Second, liberal democratic forces must be strengthened and developed in anticipation of the next election. Third, the U.S. and Iraq must develop a truly joint strategy for combating the insurgency, as only in close cooperation can the proliferation of terrorists and insurgents be arrested. Underscoring President Talabani's point regarding the support for liberal forces, Deputy Chairman of the Constitutional Committee Dr. Adnan Al-Janabi emphasized that the U.S. must reinforce liberal impulses in Syria and elsewhere in the region, and not limit efforts to cultivate democracy to just Iraq.

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JAFARI - IRAQ IS DEFENDING HUMANITY  
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5. (C/NF) In a one-on-one meeting with ITG Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jafari, Representative Wolf once again posed the question of a fixed date for withdrawal. Jafari voiced worry about the vacuum such a departure would leave, and insisted that any timetable for redeployment of U.S. forces should be based on conditions and not time. Al-Jafari placed the responsibility for Iraq's current situation squarely on Syria, claiming that Damascus seeks a resurgence of the Baathist regime and that Saudi recruits to the Iraqi insurgency are actively training in Syria. However, he stated that there is no proof that Lebanese Hizbollah (and

presumably other Iranian-backed terrorist groups) are present and active in Iraq.

16. (C/NF) Al-Jafari mused at length that the Iraqi constitution is the product of a human journey toward democracy and plurality, and stressed the need to protect not only minorities but the ability for the majority -- i.e., Shia Muslims -- to live according to their beliefs. He suggested that terrorist forces in Iraq and elsewhere represent a unique moral turpitude, expounding in detail at the exceptional depravity of their actions. (NOTE: Jafari explicitly referred to 'Arab' terrorists. END NOTE.) The United States, he said, is standing against this worldwide phenomenon; and as such, Iraq's struggle is a struggle to defend humanity.

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COMMENT - THE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS  
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17. (C) The focus of the Congressman's questions sent an important message to his senior Iraqi interlocutors: the USG is prepared to continue to help the Iraqis through the political transition to democracy, but the U.S. public expects to see greater evidence of political progress toward a situation enabling withdrawal of Coalition Forces. END COMMENT.

18. (U) Representative Wolf did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before departing post.  
Khalilzad